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Medical Myths, Lies, and Half-Truths: What We Think We Know May Be Hurting Us

Taught By Professor Steven Novella, M.D., Georgetown University, Yale School of Medicine

Course No. 1924



Average Customer Rating:

★★★★☆ 4 out of 5

5 of 7 (71%) customers would recommend the course to a friend.

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True or false: Eight glasses of water a day are mandatory for staying hydrated. Vitamin C protects you from catching a cold. Frequent snacking is the quickest way to bust your diet. Natural foods are always better for you.

You hear advice like this all the time. But what do these four nuggets of so-called medical wisdom have in common? They're all myths, half-truths, and misconceptions—pieces of information so familiar we take them for granted without truly considering the scientific truth behind them.

In today's information age, when supposedly accurate medical advice and diagnoses can be found online with the click of a computer mouse, medical myths are all around us. But much of this information isn't true, and using it to make decisions about your own health—whether it's how to treat the symptoms of the common cold or how to care for a child or aging relative—can be harmful. Even deadly.

Because you are the one who's ultimately responsible for your own health, it's critical to understand the accuracy of medical information; to break down the growing body of misinformation and discover the truth about everyday health and well-being.

"You can't assume that what you've always heard must be true simply because many other people believe it and spread it around," notes Dr. Steven Novella of the Yale School of Medicine, a medical doctor who has built his career educating patients, the public, students, and professionals about the highest standards in medical science and practice. "You should challenge all of your beliefs and, wherever possible, try to rely upon a consensus of authority or primary sources in order to check out everything that you think you know to be true."

This is exactly the approach you'll take with **Medical Myths, Lies, and Half-Truths: What We Think We Know May Be Hurting Us**. Dr. Novella's 24 revealing lectures are an empowering learning experience that will give you evidence-based guidelines for good health, will enhance your ability to be better informed about common medical myths, and will strengthen your skills at assessing the scientific truth behind medical information and advice—whether you're having an important conversation with your doctor or taking a trip down the medicine aisle of your local pharmacy.

Dispel Medical Myths with Authoritative Information

Popular and easily accessible sources such as websites, blogs, advocacy groups, marketing materials, and celebrity endorsements are where we often get quick medical information. But they're also the most unreliable sources. That's why Dr. Novella's course is an essential aid for any home—because the information in every single lecture is rooted in authoritative and reliable sources of fact and

Course Formats

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24 lectures, 30 minutes/lecture

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9. The Common Cold (info)
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knowledge:

- Physicians and other health-care professionals
- Medical research and professional organizations like the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
- University medical schools
- Regulatory agencies like the Food and Drug Administration

After you get a solid foundation for what constitutes "good" information and how to look for it, Dr. Novella guides you through some of the most prevalent and enduring medical myths. And to help you filter through the deluge of advice out there, he's organized **Medical Myths, Lies, and Half-Truths** into three major sections that focus on specific aspects of health.

- **You Are What You Eat and Drink:** So much of today's misinformation swirls around concepts related to dieting and nutrition. Here, you'll get pointed looks at proper hydration, the routine use of multivitamins, natural foods and probiotics, antioxidants, and more.
- **Fighting Diseases:** Some diseases are merely inconvenient to our everyday life; others, however, can pose significant and lasting health risks. Which makes it all the more important to sort out truth from fiction regarding vaccines, vaccine safety, the supposed link between vaccination and autism, antibiotics, chronic diseases, and other subjects you learn about in this section.
- **Exploring the Alternatives:** It seems as if there's a surplus of alternative medicines, remedies, and treatments designed to alleviate symptoms, prevent illness, or promote personal health. But which ones really work? Investigate the claims behind herbal medicines, homeopathy, acupuncture, and other alternatives that aren't as worthwhile as they claim to be.

Dr. Novella also opens your eyes to myths about pregnancy, loss of consciousness, detoxification, and the placebo effect. In one lecture toward the end of the course, he even takes you on a brief tour of common medical myths from around the world to demonstrate that medical myths vary, but misinformation is universal.

Intriguing Medical Questions, Revealing Scientific Answers

At the heart of **Medical Myths, Lies, and Half-Truths**, of course, are the answers to questions that have long perplexed many of us. Much of the myths and misinformation we hear about *sound* true and *seem* to make sense. But do they really? Dr. Novella's answers, rooted in scientific knowledge and a wealth of medical research, may surprise you.

Here is just a small sample of the many myths you'll debunk in this intriguing course.

- **The more vitamins you take every day, the better.** Many vitamins can cause dangerous toxicity if taken in high doses (a practice known as megadosing). Regular use of high doses of some vitamins can also increase the risk of disease. For example, Vitamin E supplementation has been shown to correlate with an increased risk of heart disease.
- **Soda causes hyperactivity in children.** Despite common belief, there is no evidence to support a link between caffeinated beverages like soda and behavioral changes in children. In fact, because caffeine is a stimulant, it may improve attention in some children. However, high doses of caffeine can cause jitteriness, nervousness, and sleep difficulty.
- **You can never be too clean.** Regular exposure to immune challenges actually keeps our immune systems healthy—something that can be compromised by overusing antibiotics or being overly hygienic. Recent medical studies show a possible association between decreased immune system exposure and certain diseases like asthma.
- **If you're pregnant and carrying your baby low, then it's a boy.** Myths such as these are pure folklore and are often rooted in ancient gender stereotypes. The only two legitimate methods for determining the sex of your baby are through ultrasound (which looks for physical sexual characteristics) or amniocentesis (which looks at the baby's chromosomes).
- **Most of your body heat is lost through your head.** This myth is based on the false notion that body heat rises. Heat is lost through the entire surface area of your skin in several methods, including evaporation through sweat. If anything, your hands lose a disproportionate amount of heat due to their highly vascular nature.
- **Cracking your knuckles causes arthritis.** A medical study published in the *Journal of Manipulative and Physiological Therapeutics* examined 300 knuckle crackers and found no increased risk of arthritis. It did, however, find grip weakness, which was probably caused by repeated stretching of the ligaments around the knuckle joints.

Save Yourself Time, Money, and Worry

A strong proponent of ethics in medicine and the accuracy of medical information, Dr. Novella is a veritable fountain of knowledge who will enhance your

understanding of medical truths and instill in you the confidence to overcome the bewildering amount of bad information around you. As an academic neurologist at the Yale School of Medicine, he's built a career teaching doctors how to become good doctors.

And while it's always important to seek medical advice directly from your family physician, it is just as important to be your own doctor and to have the knowledge to make smart and savvy health decisions that can save you time, money, and—most of all—unnecessary worry. All of which you'll get with **Medical Myths, Lies, and Half-Truths**.

About Your Professor

Dr. Steven Novella is Assistant Professor of Neurology at the Yale School of Medicine. He earned his M.D. from Georgetown University and completed his residency training in neurology at Yale University. Dr. Novella is active in both clinical research and in medical education at every level, including patients, the public, medical students, and health professionals.

An expert in neuroscience, Dr. Novella focuses his practice on neuromuscular disorders. His personal blog, *NeuroLogica Blog*, is considered one of the top neuroscience blogs and covers issues in neuroscience as well as the intersection of science with the media and society. Dr. Novella is also the founder and senior editor of *Science-Based Medicine*, a medical blog dedicated to promoting the highest standards of basic and clinical science in medical practice.

Dr. Novella is president and cofounder of the New England Skeptical Society, a nonprofit educational organization designed to further public understanding of science. As the host and producer of the organization's award-winning science show, *The Skeptics' Guide to the Universe*, Dr. Novella explores the latest scientific discoveries, the presentation of science in the mainstream media, and public understanding and attitudes toward science.

Should I Buy Audio or DVD?

While this course works well in all formats, the DVD version features a wealth of helpful visual elements to enhance your understanding of the truths behind medical myths and misinformation, including detailed illustrations and on-screen text.

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Customer Ratings & Reviews Summary



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Overall Rating	★☆☆☆☆
Course Content	■■■■■■■■
Professor	■■■■■■■■
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threeacers
[\(read all my reviews\)](#)
Location: BC, Canada

unsubstantiated claims

Date: January 11, 2011

"This course is a real disappointment.

After exhorting us to consider the scientific basis for medical claims, the instructor engages in a litany of claims which he does not substantiate. He rarely actually refers to specific scientific studies. So far - and we are at lecture 10 - there has been only one clear indication of an actual study of what is being referred to as 'scientific evidence'.

Also, there is no indication of social consciousness in this course. For example, in the lecture on food, he completely ignores the real and scientifically demonstrated problems that our current food production and distribution methods are causing in our environment.

This is an important topic and we expected a much more responsible effort in addressing it."

2 of 10 people found this review helpful.

Was this review helpful to you? [Yes](#) [No](#) ([Report Inappropriate Review](#))


Overall Rating	★★★★★
Course Content	■■■■■■■■
Professor	■■■■■■■■
Presentation	■■■■■■■■
Course Value	■■■■■■■■

TOP 100 CONTRIBUTOR

Get the Truth Here

Date: January 6, 2011

"So much misinformation comes over the internet about all types of medical matters so this course is a wonderful breath of fresh air. Someone is always


Dogbert 
([read all my reviews](#))
Location: Florida, USA

looking for a way to make money off medical myths. It's easy to be taken in by all of this because of only being exposed to falsehoods through the internet ads and some "health" publications. I listened to the lectures while recovering from an appendectomy so the content was especially meaningful at this time. Well-meaning folks had all types of advice about handling appendicitis, but I'm happy that I let the scientific, medical establishment take care of me and lead me to an excellent recovery. Yes, it's important to be an informed patient and to know the options about all phases of one's health, but it is so easy to be taken in by lies and myths. Do yourself a favor and complete this course. It brings rational thinking back into perspective."

2 of 2 people found this review helpful.

Was this review helpful to you? [Yes](#) [No](#) ([Report Inappropriate Review](#))

Overall Rating 
Course Content 
Professor Presentation 
Course Value 

LawnMan 
([read all my reviews](#))
Location: Bethel, CT

TOP 1000 CONTRIBUTOR

Sobering and Solid

Date: January 3, 2011

"Dr. Novella delivers information based on solid evidence and research. As humans, we are deeply flawed in our perceptions of cause & effect, risk assessment, probability, etc. Science & mathematics helps us overcome these shortcomings, but the results of a blind, scientific analysis often contradict our gut assumptions and personal experience. When faced with these realities, most people disregard the science and trust their instincts.

Dr. Novella lays out the science. It won't sit well with many people, but the truth often doesn't. I'd rather hear the hard truth than live in a pleasant fantasy.


"For most men, an ignorant enjoyment is better than an informed one; it is better to conceive the sky as a blue dome than a dark cavity, and the cloud as a golden throne than a sleety mist." - Ruskin

All natural cures sound great. Unfortunately, an idea's "likability" does not increase its likelihood of being correct."

5 of 5 people found this review helpful.

Was this review helpful to you? [Yes](#) [No](#) ([Report Inappropriate Review](#))

Overall Rating 
Course Content 
Professor Presentation 
Course Value 

Malmesbury 
([read all my reviews](#))
Location: Florida

TOP 25 CONTRIBUTOR

Listen, Learn, Live

Date: January 3, 2011

"Let's get to the bottom line -- this series of lectures is going to elicit angst from devotees of 'alternative medicine'.

I am no fan of Big Pharma, who I believe too often mislead well-meaning physicians as to their new drug offerings.

That being said, one must realize that there is far more quackery and misinformation in the arena of alternative medicine.

Although some claim great success with alternatives, these must be treated as anecdotal, absent scientific corroboration.

So the moral of the story, my friends, is this:

If you get run over by a bus, make sure the ambulance takes you to a trauma center, not an aroma therapist!

I enjoyed Professor Novella's presentation, and commend this course to all.

In the fullness of time, I look forward to medical Myths 2."

4 of 5 people found this review helpful.

Was this review helpful to you? [Yes](#) [No](#) ([Report Inappropriate Review](#))

